§ Introduction. Orienting to a Startup within a Startup within a Startup

I taught at my university's first-ever foreign campus, located in New Songdo City, Korea, during its first academic year of operation, 2014-15. Not only was our campus new, but the entire city around it was as well. My colleagues and I became sharp observers of how a then 100,000-person urban experiment built in part to meet international demands *on spec* would function under pressure of *actual* international consumer demands. Over the course of 11 months, I watched both small mom-and-pop stores and local outlets of Korean big box conglomerates shift inventories to carry more cereal, muesli, peanut butter, and Belgian beer. I also saw significant changes in coffee. While Korea's coffee culture had been growing steadily since U.S.-based popular culture became a fixture after the early 1950s war, it expanded rapidly after Korea's economic recovery in the late 1990s. Both in our city and on numerous visits to Korea's massive capital, Seoul, I typically encountered coffee houses whose baristas would look at me quizzically when I ordered something *other* than a cute, sweetened, pre-measured espresso beverage. But then in seemingly no time, Korea adapted U.S.- and Japan-based artisanal coffee engineering and rapidly distributed it countrywide. By 2016—only a year after I had left—Seoul had more than 17,000 coffee retail stores. That was more per capita than either San Francisco or Seattle (Lee & Kim, 2016).

But Korea's embrace of retail coffee culture is not merely an example of straightforward importation. Granted, the very American brand, Starbucks, was the thin end of the wedge at the front of this trend, opening its first store in Seoul in 1999 (Lee & Kim, 2016). However, another Seoul Starbucks outlet's sign is likely recognizable even to those who *cannot* read its native Korean-language (*hangeul*) characters: the transliteration for "Starbucks Coffee" (스타벅스커피) stands out prominently on a touristy street in Seoul's popular Insadong neighborhood. Less recognizable perhaps is the juxtaposition of those characters alongside the more common English-language Starbucks marketing that nearly universally circulates everywhere *else* in Seoul and beyond—and the puzzling appearance of this clear assertion of Korean language in the middle of an overtly international area. While I have not yet tracked down an authoritative rationale behind this sign, I *have* become quite familiar with some of the complexities of Korea's location in a globalized economy in

which English is a putatively stable, acquirable, and tradable commodity. My year in Korea taught me about the country's pride in its language, its food, its long national history, its baseball, its ambitious megastructural building projects, its investment in advanced technologies, and its desire to project Korean culture abroad. It also taught me about its insular management cultures, its intense and anxiety-ridden education system, its negative if not poisonous relationship with Japan, and its simultaneous fascination with and hesitations about the United States.

On our campus in New Songdo City, colleagues and I quickly became aware that we were part of a large and visible investment in Korean-American relations—one with stakeholders at the home campus of my university; among the administrators of the "Asia Campus"; in the offices of the educational foundation behind the campus, the local free enterprise zone authority, various private-public partners literally building the city around us, and the education ministry; and at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul. Along with several other colleagues as well as administrators and students, I appeared during brief news interviews on an English-language Korean television network to answer questions about what the campus was and why it was there. And Korean/Korean-speaking staff members regularly updated us on stories about the campus in local and national print/online media outlets. Meanwhile, we were beginning to teach, advise, support, coordinate, and plan under the authority and with the brand of a major U.S.-based university.

I joked with colleagues and friends then and I have since that I had just finished reading Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars trilogy (*Red Mars*, *Green Mars*, and *Blue Mars*), in which an initially small but diverse cast of explorers begins colonizing and terraforming a new planet. Mars' first human residents needed to build habitats with the materials they brought with them, repurposing spacecraft shipping containers as housing. We were far more privileged at the Asia Campus, moving into recently built apartments a short walk from classroom, office, and administrative spaces. But the "explorers" metaphor stuck as we walked or cycled to the center of "town" or to metro stations a kilometer or more away to shop for groceries. It continued to stick the more we learned about the ecological impacts of "reclaiming" land from the Yellow Sea.

To the confusion and maybe annoyance of a couple of editors who have read earlier/shorter drafts or installments of this book, the tendency I just displayed above to drift between intellectual/conceptual context and a detailed description of actual, daily life at the Asia Campus feels unavoidable. I was perhaps primed to pay specific kinds of attention to the campus not

only by my science fiction reading but also by the emergence of my interest in affect and vital materialism, evident in an article I was drafting about my preoccupation with the intersection of materialist thinking, rhetoric, and translingual composition, which I was revising as I transitioned to Korea (Jordan, 2015). As part of that project, I read across several fields, including posthumanist and speculative philosophy, and I was prompted to think about the "context" of my situation by casting as wide a net as possible. Of course, my background in second language writing and rhetoric and composition had already predisposed me to think about language work in social terms, but it had been nearly 20 years since I myself had felt especially sensitive about my own social and material surrounds while living and working. As a Peace Corps volunteer in Poland in the late 1990s, I could not leave my apartment without encountering ubiquitous symbols and sensory inputs reminding me I was far from home. To this day, I have sensitive ears for Polish (even if I don't quite understand the individual words) and a sensitive nose for dill, perfectly ripe strawberries, and the burning coal that meant cooking and heating in many parts of that country. Those intellectual, social, and sensory experiences are inextricable from one another, and the unique environs of the Asia Campus acted on me similarly. While the impetus for this project was scholarly—born from an urge to learn from my university's great international experiment that was part of an even larger international experiment—I have been unable to pursue it without daily encountering a complex set of memories and impressions. Recalling the courses I taught, the students I met, and the writing I did also recalls/re-embodies the colleagues who became close friends; the smells of red pepper paste and of dust blowing onshore from as far away as the Gobi Desert; the sounds of massive trucks hauling dredged earth for the city-scale construction project in which we lived and of consistently polite Korean recordings on the metro trains announcing next stops; and the tastes of street food, of gracious home cooking, and of impromptu meetings in, of all places, the Mexican restaurant underneath the Irish pub.

There I go again. But I was not alone. As the participants in this project relate in explicit and implicit ways, whether they were living, learning, and working in their formally defined "home" country or not, some part of this experience was novel for each of them. Mostly monolingual native English speakers, myself included, were working at an English-medium institution created and self-consciously styled as an "extended" campus and not a "branch" campus of our U.S.-based university, but we were in meaningful ways answerable to Korean authorities who had never set foot on the U.S.-based home campus, who spoke Korean exclusively, and who were oriented to

management methods that seemed opaque to many of my colleagues and me.[1] Students, the vast majority of whom were Korean nationals, were in a familiar country but also subject to the expectations of a university very different from the domestic institutions many of their peers were attending—including at least three such institutions that were a brief walk from our campus. And all of us were living in a city that was rising out of the sea around us, shaping us and being shaped. That city in turn was part of a very old but simultaneously very young and dynamic country investing heavily in higher education and eager to find ways forward with an equally eager U.S.-based partner university.

Goals and Questions

This study represents a major investment in understanding that aspirational educational experiment through my experiences as a scholar-teacher working alongside students and colleagues—all of us affecting and affected by an emerging transnational scene.

I have remained engaged with the Asia Campus in ways that perhaps continue to blur lines between advocacy for and scholarship about international education. I have traveled back to the Asia Campus several times with funding from university offices with vested interests in the campus' success. I have been fascinated on each visit to discover ways the campus and city have changed—often drastically in the form of entire new buildings and even newly reclaimed land. I have served on the executive committee that helps oversee administrative decisions on the campus. I have promoted the campus to prospective new faculty hires in my home department. And, all along, I have read literature on international and transnational[2] education—and on international branch campuses, specifically; on English's spread and evolution in Korea; on writing in the majors/disciplines represented on the Asia Campus; and on the transfer of knowledge about and practices of writing.

Focusing on students' writing made sense, of course, because of my background and interests, which include a legacy of scholarship that assumes or

1 According to my university's former chief global officer, Michael Hardman (personal communication, October 22, 2020), the university had described and begun marketing the Asia Campus as an "extended" rather than a "branch" campus in order to emphasize for Korean government authorities, students, and families the curricular equivalence between campuses. But the university formalized that description when the U.S. Department of Education notified it that it needed to ensure that the Asia Campus' operations complied with applicable U.S. laws. Once it had ensured compliance, university students could then use federally guaranteed financial aid to pay tuition at either campus.

2 A distinction I discuss in detail in Chapter 1.

argues explicitly for the value of writing in higher education. My focus also made sense because Asia Campus administrators in connection with colleagues in my home department decided to depart from historical practice by requiring all Asia Campus students to take both of the required lower-division writing courses at the university instead of allowing some students to place out of one of the courses based on high school grade point average and standardized test scores. (Thus, one of the new campus' innovations was literally doubling down on the university's emphasis on writing education.) More broadly, my focus seemed highly relevant to ongoing efforts in the field to understand what students can learn about writing in one context and then transfer to another—a new course, new discipline, or new location—especially as those efforts continue in many institutions that are actively seeking more diverse students and more global connections.

But as I will relate in detail in Chapter 4, there are serious and complex questions about the extent to which what students know about and do with writing actually transfers from one course or from another context to the next. Some scholars go as far as questioning the value of teaching writing altogether: Ilona Leki (2007) concludes her longitudinal study of four multilingual undergraduate students on a note of pessimism about whether any writing class can teach most of what students need to know to write effectively (p. 284). But behind that claim is Leki's clear statement that writing is not irrelevant—just that it must be studied as one activity among many others, not set in sole relief against a static contextual backdrop. She writes,

> what has been enhanced for me is my sense of the importance of attempting to understand not just the individuals seated in a given classroom but also how those individuals negotiate the complexities of the social, cultural, academic, and sociopolitical environments that surround them. (Leki, 2007, p. 285)

Leki's realization promises to be humbling for both teachers and researchers. As both a teacher and researcher myself, I have been humbled as I have been steeped in such scholarly realizations and related advice. I was certainly humbled on arriving at the Asia Campus, situated as it is at the nexus of overlapping "social, cultural, academic, and sociopolitical environments"—a nexus at which students, colleagues, and I were enacting on a daily basis and at many scales the broad vision that was intended to guide this new campus.

In short, I have wanted since early in my time at the Asia Campus to ask questions similar to those Leki (2007) and other scholars I survey in this book have asked about what "context" really means beyond the scope of an assignment or course. Such questions, of course, are not new to second language

writing, composition studies, or Writing Across the Curriculum/Writing in Disciplines (WAC/WID). But the experiment in which I found myself definitely made "context" more sensible and more immediate than it had been in my previous experiences.

My goal thus became to study what happens to writing across the curriculum and in disciplines as a highly privileged activity within an especially dynamic "context"—an aspirational university's brand-new campus located in an aspirational new city in an aspirational country. Indeed, a startup within a startup within a startup with all the futuristic optimism and messy uncertainty that description suggests. And since international education efforts are only becoming more complex due to changes in immigration policies, the proliferation of digital communication platforms, varying country-level restrictions on those platforms, and most recently a global pandemic, it seems that paying even closer attention to the roles writing education can and does play in experiments like my own university's makes sense.

As one of the first faculty members to travel to the new campus in 2014, I was asked to teach a first-year seminar course and to provide writing center-style tutorial assistance to the first student cohorts. I offered to provide WAC/WID support for faculty colleagues as well based on the understanding that I was as interested in supporting colleagues' creation of effective writing assignments as I was in helping students—an interest that had arisen during a study of faculty attitudes about writing instruction in engineering, in which my collaborator and I learned both how much writing was a preoccupation among faculty and how little faculty colleagues shared their knowledge about writing (see Jordan & Kedrowicz, 2011). In the Asia Campus' compact and cohesive setting, I saw an opportunity to study writing and interactions around writing more closely. Specifically, I saw an opportunity to go beyond the surface-level claims about internationalization that Tiane Donahue (2009) critiques—claims predicated on what she terms an "import/export" (p. 212) model of knowledge-making that fails to cultivate "deep familiarity" (p. 236) with contexts outside the US. Given that Asia Campus students were also required to spend at least a year of their academic careers at the U.S.-based campus, I also saw an opportunity to study the effects of that kind of transition. So, primed by my own previous research on WAC/WID and second language writing as well as other published scholarship, and aware of the university's emphasis on the primacy of writing in the new campus' curricula, I generated an initial set of writing- and pedagogy-focused research questions:

- How is writing being explicitly and implicitly taught in courses across the curriculum at the new campus?

- What kinds of writing are instructors assigning across the curriculum?
- How do students perceive/respond to the writing assignments and teaching?
- How do instructors respond to the students' writing?
- What effects do students' transitions from the international campus to the U.S. campus have on their own and their instructors' perceptions and responses?

While those questions consistently guided interviews and my analyses of other data about writing, I understood from the beginning of my study, as I have noted, that the complexity of that writing's "context" made it impossible for me to isolate writing from its surrounds. Thus, I added this question to my initial list:

- How does writing as a privileged literate activity reveal the relationship between internationalist claims about education and the daily, lived complexity behind such claims?

This book thus draws from WAC/WID as well as several related fields, including second language writing and rhetoric and composition, to describe through participants' and my own meaning making the ways writing has figured as a key collection of knowledges and practices that help shape and are shaped by this university's complexity. Despite what I will relate later as the smoothly marketable promise of such an educational experiment, the campus', the university's, the host city's, and Korea's mutual embeddedness exemplifies, reinforces, and provides nuance to scholarly arguments that literacies—in this case, literacies developing in conditions of daily cultural and language contact—may certainly be supported by classroom and curricular plans for teaching and learning but can never be reducible to them.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 provides an overview of "international" and "transnational" perspectives on education as those terms relate to and diverge from each other to provide context for my study. Chapter 1 also discusses Korea's complex relationship with English and with English-language education as that country has aspired to a more international stature—a stature that attracted my university's establishment of a campus and that continues to inform its presence there. Given the inextricability of my daily lived experience as a resident of the startup campus and startup city from my study itself, Chapter 2 provides a critical narrative of that experience and its connections with the scholarly,

pedagogical, and administrative work with which I was engaged. Chapter 3 more fully introduces and describes my research site as well as the methodological considerations guiding my study.

In the context of existing scholarship in WID and also in teaching communication and psychology (the fields in which student-participants were majoring), Chapter 4 contends that students in my study do not simply carry writing knowledge with them from course to course and campus to campus but instead repurpose and reorient to knowledge and experiences, testing their utility at the nexus of personal interests/backgrounds and academic requirements. The chapter also observes that faculty members in my study, while insistent on rigorous introductions to their disciplines, are similarly sensitive to the disciplines' sociality and to their own ongoing socialization to the transnational context.

In Chapter 5, I focus on one student's motivation to naturalize her own language competency as she builds personal and professional identities. Some second language writers' identity work has been described in terms that foreground their coping with intransigent academic and professional demands; however, students like this one act in ways beyond "coping," skillfully and even ambitiously identifying affordances in an ecological push and pull with teachers and mentors. At the same time, far from representing static targets for academic competence, faculty members are often aware of and responsive to students' varied goals. And even when they are not aware, their interactions with and reflections about students demonstrate that learning in this transnational context is more than the sum of its explicit parts. It is indeed natural and, thus, considerably more complex than the explicit setup of courses and curricula.

Chapter 6 views English's complexity in Korea through the work and reflections of another student. While English competence is a mark of status and achievement in Korea, "competence" can be a moving target as a result of the country's evolving international relations and related language politics. For the focal student in this chapter in particular, the match between his familial/phenotypical Koreanness and his cultural and linguistic Americanness is uncertain, and that uncertainty affects his relationships with peers and faculty members. More broadly, it represents ambiguity about the relationship between fixed language standards and language's actual spread.

In Chapter 7, I conclude by reflecting on teaching, learning, observing, and experiencing in this transnational experiment, arguing that the ongoing evolution of transnational education necessitates empirical sensitivity as well as a keen awareness that relevant writing-related scholarship, teaching, and administration are inextricable from one another.